

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel claims 23 and 40-42.

Please amend the claims as follow:

1. (Currently Amended) A downhole filter comprising a tubular member having a wall defining at least one opening, at least a portion of the opening having an outer width less than an inner width, wherein an edge portion of the at least one opening is hardened by a quenching process.
2. (Original) The filter of claim 1, wherein said outer width defines the minimum width of the opening.
3. (Original) The filter of claim 1, wherein said portion of said opening defining said outer width is located on an outer circumference of the tubular member.
4. (Original) The filter of claim 1, wherein the opening has a keystone form.
5. (Original) The filter of claim 1, wherein the opening is created by laser-cutting.
6. (Original) The filter of claim 1, wherein the opening is created by abrasive water jet cutting.
7. (Original) The filter of claim 1, wherein the opening is in the form of a slot and extends longitudinally of the tubular member.
8. (Original) The filter of claim 1, wherein the opening is in the form of a slot and extends circumferentially of the tubular member.
9. (Original) The filter of claim 1, wherein the opening is in the form of a slot and extends helically of the tubular member.

10. (Original) The filter of claim 1, wherein the opening is in the form of a serpentine slot.
11. (Original) The filter of claim 1, wherein the tubular member is diametrically expandable.
12. (Original) The filter of claim 11, wherein the wall of the tubular member incorporates extendible portions.
13. (Original) The filter of claim 11, wherein the wall of the tubular member has at least one substantially circular opening therein which opening is adapted to assume a circumferentially-extending slot-form of smaller width than the original substantially circular opening, following diametric expansion of the tubular member.
14. (Original) The filter of claim 1, wherein the wall of the tubular member defines a plurality of openings.
15. (Currently Amended) A wellbore filter comprising a tubular member having at least one opening therethrough, the at least one opening having a serpentine configuration, wherein an edge portion of the at least one opening is hardened by a quenching process.
16. (Currently Amended) A method of filtering wellbore fluids, the method comprising:
placing a downhole filter within a wellbore, the downhole filter comprising a tubular member defining at least one opening, at least a portion of the opening having an outer width less than an inner width, wherein an edge portion of the opening is hardened by a quenching process; and
passing wellbore fluids into an interior passage of the tubular member through the opening.

17. (Original) The method of claim 16, further comprising sizing the outer width of said opening to filter wellbore particulate matter of a predetermined diameter.
18. (Currently Amended) A downhole filter arrangement comprising a tubular member having a wall defining at least one laser-cut perforation, wherein an outer edge portion of the perforation has been quenched.
19. (Original) The filter arrangement of claim 18, wherein the tubular member is formed of metal.
20. (Original) The filter arrangement of claim 18, wherein the wall of the tubular member defines a plurality of laser-cut perforations.
21. (Original) The filter arrangement of claim 18, wherein the perforation is in the form of a slot of constant width along the length of the slot.
22. (Original) The filter arrangement of claim 21, wherein the slot is of serpentine form.
23. Cancelled
24. (Original) The filter arrangement of claim 18, wherein the perforation has an outer width less than an inner width.
25. - 42. Cancelled.

Please add the following new claims:

43. (New) The downhole filter of claim 1, further comprising a deformable filter sheet disposed around the exterior of the tubular member, the deformable filter sheet having one or more perforations

44. (New) The downhole filter of claim 43, wherein the tubular member and the filter sheet are expandable.

45. (New) The downhole filter of claim 43, wherein the one or more perforations are laser cut.

46. (New) A method of filtering wellbore fluids, the method comprising:
forming a downhole filter, comprising:
forming at least one opening in a wall of a tubular, at least a portion of the opening having an outer width less than an inner width; and
quenching an edge portion of the opening;
placing the downhole filter within a wellbore; and
passing wellbore fluids into an interior passage of the tubular through the at least one opening.

47. (New) The method of claim 46, wherein quenching the edge portion comprises directing an inert gas onto the cutting area.

48. (New) The method of claim 46, wherein forming the at least one opening comprises controlling an energy beam from a laser-cutting head such that a width of the at least one opening produced while the head is stationary is the same as when the head is moving.

49. (New) The downhole filter of claim 1, wherein the quenching process comprises directing an inert gas onto the cutting area.